



The Advocate



March 2015

Standing Up Against Charter Schools

AFT MA and MTA unite in Pioneer-hosted panel

As we mark the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's historic march on Washington and continue to fight for the ideals he espoused, it appears that some are interpreting Dr. King's vision in different, potentially conflicting ways.

On February 26, the Pioneer Institute hosted a panel discussion at the Omni Parker House in Boston, the title of which was "Civil Rights, Charter Schools & Teacher Unions." Among the sponsors of the program

were the Black Alliance for Educational Options, the SABIS education network, the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, and the Program on Education Policy & Governance at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Among the speakers and panelists were SABIS school Director Dr. Sephira Shuttlesworth, Stanford Professor Dr. Clayborne Carson, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, History Department Chair Dr. Raymond Arsenault, Boston Alliance of Charter Schools Senior Advisor Kevin Andrews, Black Alliance for Educational Options Action Fund Chairman Gerard Robinson, Massachusetts Teachers Association President Barbara Madeloni, and AFT MA President Tom Gosnell.

After a welcome from Pioneer Institute Distinguished Senior Fellow and former Massachusetts Senate President Thomas Birmingham, Dr. Shuttlesworth (who is the widow of noted Civil Rights leader Fred Shuttlesworth) spoke of the efforts she and her late husband had engaged in on behalf of the underserved and of her own experiences with segregation.

"My introduction to school choice came when my siblings integrated our school in Jackson, TN," she explained, noting that her family had been told that school choice was "a right for every family."

Shuttlesworth then discussed the profound changes that school choice has undergone, suggesting that the path ends with charter schools.

"I want schools that children run to and walk away from," she said, suggesting that SABIS has created such schools and helped so-called "failing schools" out of "academic emergency."

"We are determined to provide the same education in struggling communities as we do in the best schools in the country and the world," Shuttlesworth said.

Opening by saying he was "relieved" to see that the morning's program

was called charter schools *and* teachers unions, not charter schools *versus* teachers unions, Dr. Carson asked himself what Dr. King would say about the current state of education.

"He would have something to say on both sides," Carson suggested.

Noting that Dr. King was "a lifelong advocate of unions" who "gave his life for the right to organize" and reminding the audience that Dr. King was in Memphis on April 4, 1968 as part of a sanitation workers' strike, Dr. Carson



STANDING UP FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION
AFT MA President Tom Gosnell addresses the audience at a recent discussion about civil rights and education

also noted that the first black high school in Atlanta was created with help from Dr. King's grandfather, who was the founding head of the NAACP in GA. He also mentioned that Dr. King himself attended an "experimental school" at Atlanta University.

"Dr. King was concerned with how to provide the engine of opportunity that is at root of American identity," he suggested, before posing the poignant question, "What has happened to this engine?"

While some posit that charter schools may be the new engine, Dr. Carter countered by asking, "Are we trying to make education better for *all* children or for *our* children?" and also suggested that, in trying to make schools that we see as better than public schools, we may be "leaving behind" other schools.

"We need to think about those left behind," he said, paraphrasing Dr. King's premise that "we should resolve to never become so secure in our thinking or our living that we will forget the least of these" and suggesting that "we will never be what we ought to be until they are what they ought to be."

Introducing the panel, Cape Cod native Dr. Arsenault (author of the book *Freedom Riders*, on which the Emmy Award-winning public television program was based) suggested that, "educational opportunity is a real

goal of the Civil Rights movement and a key to achieving a true democracy,"

While Dr. Arsenault posed education reform as "a pathway to freedom," he questioned how charter schools and teachers unions fit into all this.

"I do not recall any of them talking about charter schools or teachers unions specifically," he said of the Civil Rights activists he interviewed for his book, "but the issues are very close to what they did back in 1961."

As it may admittedly be difficult to see how charter schools, vouchers, testing, privatization, and the importance of teachers unions fit into the civil rights discussion, Dr. Arsenault reposed the question thusly:

"Has the creation of charter schools done more good than harm," he asked, noting that the answer, "may depend on which part of American we are talking

about."

As Massachusetts has "some of most successful charter schools in country" (while his new home state of Florida has "some of the worst"), Dr. Arsenault suggested that some charter schools may, in fact, be worse than other public schools, and vice versa.

Limiting the discussion to Massachusetts, Dr. Arsenault asked the panelists why teachers unions' resistance to charters schools in Massachusetts has not lessened considering how well the schools do.

As he had been taught to do in high school, Gosnell rose to his feet to reply, reminding the audience and his fellow panelists that, "Massachusetts regular public schools are number one in the nation on the NAEP tests and number one in the Western World on the international math and science tests," noting that, in this state (and

in most of the top-performing states), "all public schools teachers work under a collective bargaining agreement."

While he admitted that, as a "long-time public educator in Massachusetts," he could only talk about this state, Gosnell observed that, "there are some charters in Massachusetts that do quite well, but also others that do not do well," and suggested that the real issue is the poverty that "cheats" so many of our students and their

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families and communities, regardless of what school options there may be.

"We don't address that," Gosnell observed. "We try to by creating other options, but they don't go to the heart of it. We must address the poverty in which these boys and girls live. They deserve better than we are giving them."

Madeloni then picked up Dr. Carson's idea of those who get "left behind" and suggested (as Gosnell had) that this was the "critical frame" for this conversation.

Noting that charter schools typically have lower numbers of ELL and SPED students than public schools, Madeloni suggested that, in adding charter schools to the equation, we have created "a two-tier system" that not only does not serve all students but actively pushes some out.

"What does that mean for people who are committed to civil rights?" she asked.

Again echoing Gosnell, Madeloni

Continued on page 5



**Come to the
29th Annual**



**AFT/BTU
Paraprofessional
Statewide Conference**

Saturday, April 11, 2015

8:30 AM - 3 PM

BTU Hall

(180 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston)

Registration deadline is Monday, April 6

**Please call 617 288 3322 or see
our story on page 4 for more information**

The Advocate

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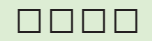
TAKING THE CONVERSATION HIGHER

On Wednesday March 4, more than 200 students, staff, faculty, and administrators from public higher education institutions across Massachusetts joined at the State House for Public Higher Education Advocacy Day to advocate for more affordable and accessible public higher education in the Commonwealth and the funding of union contracts.

BOLD PRINT

The Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) is extending its Customer Service 'Hotline' hours to include 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. in addition to 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

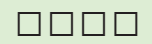
The direct line is 781-381-6600.



Legendary Jazz promoter Fred Taylor was recently honored with Berklee College of Music's inaugural George Wein Impresario Award.

Taylor has been intricately involved with the Boston music scene as the long-time booking agent for Scullers Jazz Club (www.scullersjazz.com) and worked with Wein on many historic events, including the Newport and Tanglewood Jazz Festivals. Before working for Scullers, Taylor ran the famed Kenmore Square venues Paul's Mall and the Jazz Workshop. He has also produced concerts at Symphony Hall, the Boston Garden, and many other legendary venues.

Congratulations, Fred!

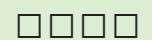


Bottom Line Massachusetts (www.bottomline.org) will host the 10th annual Get In, Graduate, and Go Far event on Thursday, April 9th at the Seaport District's Boston Convention Center. This year, Governor Charlie Baker will be recognized for his commitment to education.

"Governor Baker has said that he aims to make the cost of higher education more affordable for students in Massachusetts" said Executive Director Mike Wasserman. "Our vision aligns with his: that college affordability is one of the most important factors in college choice and that every student deserves the best chance to attend college, break the cycle of poverty and succeed – regardless of their socioeconomic situation."

At the event, Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito are scheduled to appear and speak. A number of local Bottom Line students will also share stories about how the program has impacted their lives.

For more information, please go to <http://bottomline.org/Get-Involved/Attend-an-Event/Boston-Dinner.aspx>.



Got news to share?
Send it to advocate@aftma.net

Legislators Are Listening

Statewide tour gives constituents a chance to talk

In his recent address to the Senate, President Stan Rosenberg suggested that, “the best ideas are often found not within these halls, but in our neighborhoods and our coffee shops, in our board rooms and union halls, in our office break rooms and at our family tables.”

With this in mind, a series of forums was offered during the months of February and March at which regional representatives could meet directly with their constituents and discuss the issues that mattered most to them. These “Commonwealth Conversations” consisted of eight events that spanned the state and covered a wide array of topics.

“We hope to hear directly from the people of the commonwealth about how we can help improve their lives through our work in the senate,” Rosenberg said. “These conversations will help us craft our agenda and engage the public in the good work that we hope to accomplish this legislative session.”

Senator Pat Jehlen (see story this issue) says that she sees the tour as “an opportunity for us to learn about each other’s districts...and...for constituents to share their concerns.”

Explaining that the series was modeled on statewide economic development forums held in 2003, Senator Michael Rodrigues said that he was “honored to play a role in organizing the Commonwealth Conversations Tour...and excited to engage with people from all corners of the state to learn more about the challenges and opportunities they are

encountering.”

According to Rodrigues, the sites were chosen by Senators from each region. “They got to decide what stops to make and issues to highlight,” he says, “and Senators were able to hear residents on all areas of interest that are important to them.”

At the kick-off event that was held in Western Mass on February 4, Senator Eric Lesser spoke of the opportune timing of the tour.

“The Springfield area is undergoing many significant changes, and residents need and deserve a state Senate that is open, transparent, and above all, committed to listening,” said Lesser, who also participated in the Metro Boston tour stop on March 4. “Today’s discussions mark a strong first step in making sure the State Senate is responsive to the needs of Western Massachusetts.”

Another of the events was held in Lawrence on February 23 and was hosted by Senator Kathleen O’Connor Ives and Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr. While the title of the forum was “Challenges and Opportunities in the Small Business Community,” the topics discussed were much more wide-ranging.

“We are beginning this Senate session with one of the most important tasks in government – listening,” said Tarr. “Knowing that our communities are facing many issues, we are coming to hear directly about what they are and what we can do about them by working together. I’m confident that we will learn critical things on this day and this tour that will make our del-

egation and our Senate more effective and more responsive.”

Among the 300 participants in this Merrimack Valley event was Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin.

“They listened,” he said, “which is pretty good because the Legislature is the only body that listens to the teachers unions.”

Despite being limited to just two minutes of talking time, McLaughlin was able to get across the major points he had come to discuss.

“I talked about the partnership and the common vision we have for the students of Lawrence,” he recalls, “and that there is no easy solution to school reform.”

After the official event was over, McLaughlin spoke with a number of legislators, distributing copies of a page of “talking points” that had been created by AFT MA.

“I have a pretty good working relationship with my senators,” he reasoned, “and I’d like to keep it that way!”

Among these were making higher education more affordable, strengthening collective bargaining, getting rid of testing, allowing individual communities to determine whether or not charter schools should be welcomed, and providing public schools and libraries with more funding.

During comments by Lawrence Mayor Daniel Rivera, McLaughlin found himself at the center of attention.

“When the mayor got up to speak, he did recognize me and I was the only

one recognized,” McLaughlin notes, reticent to speak highly of himself. “I was surprised, but it made me feel that we were respected.”

McLaughlin says that Rivera also made mention of Lawrence’s “long labor history and a long tradition of working with labor unions.”

“Making sure the issues and concerns of the people of the Merrimack Valley are fresh in the minds of senators as we begin setting our agenda and priorities for the coming year is of utmost importance,” said Senator Barbara L’Italien, who co-hosted the Lawrence event

The MetroWest tour stop was held on March 2 in Newton.

“Our conversations throughout the tour will center on some of the major issues impacting MetroWest residents, organizations and communities, including economic development, youth empowerment and STEM education,” said Senator Karen Spilka, who saw the tour as “a terrific opportunity for people...to engage with government, make their voices heard on their priorities and concerns and help guide the Senate in our new legislative session.”

During the Newton event, AFT MA President Tom Gosnell spoke about such diverse yet intricately-related issues as poverty, the need for more student services, and the high costs of higher education.

“Education was not a big topic,” Gosnell admits, “but I got my point across, even when I had to talk very quickly!”

Anyone who was unable to attend or speak at the public forums is invited to submit comments by visiting <http://malegislature.gov/cc>. ■

A Delicate Balance

Public hearings help explain Chapter 70

Over the past few months, the Massachusetts Foundation Budget Review Commission (MFBRC) has hosted a series of public hearings throughout the Commonwealth. The MFBRC was created by the Legislature to examine the Chapter 70 school finance law, with a focus on the how the spending standard is calculated. The commission is due to issue a report next June with recommendations to update and improve the law.

Chapter 70 is intended to have an equalizing effect by ensuring that each of the state’s 328 school districts has sufficient resources to provide for all students, taking into account the ability of each local government to contribute. It helps ensure that less wealthy districts receive more aid than their wealthier neighbors, in the hopes of providing equal opportunity and access to all.

The hearings were scheduled in order to provide a forum in which the public could testify and exchange ideas about the education budget and how it is determined and put to use.

“The Commission will meet six times to go over the budget,” explains AFT MA Field Representative for Legislature J. Coley Walsh, “and make recommendations to the Legislature.”

The hearings were held in Danvers, Somerset, Northampton, South Yarmouth, Bolton, and Dorchester. Among the topics discussed were increased health care costs and how they affect both teachers and students, the

growth of special needs populations (especially in lower income areas), and the additional costs involved with rural education, particularly those related to transportation.

“From the initial hearing in Northampton to the last hearing in Boston there were issues that were heard repeatedly,” Walsh observed, noting that many students, teachers and

parents also testified at the hearings, asking for such things as “proper” and “adequate” facilities and materials, including technology and Internet access.

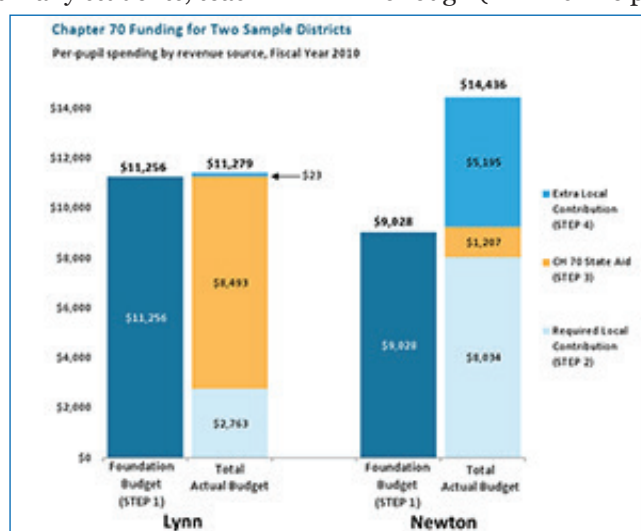
“The participation of the students, teachers, parents, elected officials, administrators and others interested in education brought many of the theoretical issues into bold concrete reality by their testimony,” Walsh said.

On March 8, members of the public joined legislators and school administrators at the Joseph Lee Elementary School in Dorchester for what would be the final hearing.

Among the members of the panel

were Joint Committee on Education Co-chairs Representative Alice Peisch and Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz (who served as moderator for the hearing), along with Senator Pat Jehlen, Representative Michael Moran, and a representative from the office of Representative Sal DiDomenico. The education community was ably represented by Walsh and MTA President Barbara Madeloni.

After opening remarks by Boston Interim Superintendent John McDonough (in which he posited that the



Foundation budget “does not accurately reflect number of sped or ell students we serve; nor does it accurately support teachers salaries” and noted how many funding sources have been “decreased

or eliminated” since the Foundation was founded), members of the audience lined up at a central microphone to address the panel. Among the first speakers was AFT MA President Tom Gosnell, who pointed out how, especially in the urban districts that AFT MA represents, the numbers of children in poverty and also of ELL students have increased. He also noted the “significant resources” that are necessary to provide the many inclusion and wraparound services our

schools offer, the impact of which is “absolutely enormous.”

“Unless we deal with the opportunity gap first,” Gosnell emphasized, “we will not be able to deal with the achievement gap.”

Among other speakers were Malden Superintendent Dr. David DeRuosi, Jr., Walpole School Committee Member Nancy Gallivan, and Citizen Schools Executive Director Pat Kirby.

“We’ve made progress as a commonwealth,” Kirby said, “but the reason I think we are having this commission is that we all see the gaps that remain. We need to find models that work and avoid more of the same models that aren’t proven to work.”

There was also a large contingent of students and parents who testified, waved signs, and made themselves heard throughout the program.

Looking back at the series of hearings, Walsh recalled hearing the same issues raised over and over.

“Speakers told us that the 1993 standards (when the Foundation Budget was adopted) for special needs education and for health insurance payments had not even come close to being realistic to meet today’s needs,” he explained.

Looking forward, Walsh noted that the Commission will have several more internal meetings “with the goal of having a report by the end of June.” This report should focus on matters that come under the Foundation Budget, but, Walsh notes, it may also include “a list of recommendations on other issues raised during the six hearings.” ■

Proposed GIC Changes (Effective July 1, 2015)

The following is an updated and more comprehensive version of the chart that ran in our February, 2015 issue.

	Fallon Direct Care HMO		Fallon Select Care HMO		Health New England HMO		Neighborhood Prime* HMO	
Deductible	Current	July 1, 2015	Current	July 1, 2015	Current	July 1, 2015	Current	July 1, 2015
Individual/Family	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900
Specialist Office Visit (deductible does NOT apply)								
Tier 1	\$25 per visit	\$30 per visit	\$25 per visit	\$30 per visit	\$25 per visit	\$30 per visit	\$25 per visit	\$30 per visit
Tier 2	No tiering	\$60 per visit	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit
Tier 3	No tiering	\$90 per visit	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit
Inpatient Hospital Care (copay and deductible apply)								
Tier 1	\$200 per Admission	\$275 per Admission	\$250 per Admission	\$275 per Admission	\$250 per Admission	\$275 per Admission	\$250 per Admission	\$275 per Admission
Tier 2	No tiering	No tiering	\$500 per Admission	\$500 per Admission	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering
Tier 3	No tiering	No tiering	\$750 per Admission	\$1,500 per Admission	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering
Outpatient Surgery (copay and deductible apply)								
Tier 1	\$110 per occurrence	\$250 per occurrence	\$125 per occurrence	\$250 per occurrence	\$110 per Occurrence	\$250 per occurrence	\$110 per Occurrence	\$250 per Occurrence
Tier 2	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering
Pharmacy – Retail (deductible does NOT apply)								
Tier 1	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10
Tier 2	\$25	\$30	\$25	\$30	\$25	\$30	\$25	\$30
Tier 3	\$50	\$65	\$50	\$65	\$50	\$65	\$50	\$65
Pharmacy – Mail Order (deductible does NOT apply)								
Tier 1	\$20	\$25	\$20	\$25	\$20	\$25	\$20	\$25
Tier 2	\$50	\$75	\$50	\$75	\$50	\$75	\$50	\$75
Tier 3	\$110	\$165	\$110	\$165	\$110	\$165	\$110	\$165

*Neighborhood Health Plan renamed as "Neighborhood Prime"

	Harvard Pilgrim Independence POS		Harvard Pilgrim Primary Choice HMO		Tufts Navigator POS		Tufts Spirit HMO	
Deductible	Current	July 1, 2015	Current	July 1, 2015	Current	July 1, 2015	Current	July 1, 2015
Individual/Family	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900
Specialist Office Visit (deductible does NOT apply)								
Tier 1	\$20 per visit	\$30 per visit	\$20 per visit	\$30 per visit	\$25 per visit	\$30 per visit	\$25 per visit	\$30 per visit
Tier 2	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit
Tier 3	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit
Inpatient Hospital Care (copay and deductible apply)								
Tier 1	\$250 per admission	\$275 per admission	\$250 per admission	\$275 per Admission	\$300 per admission	\$275 per Admission	\$300 per Admission	\$300 per Admission
Tier 2	\$500 per admission	\$500 per admission	\$500 per admission	\$500 per Admission	\$700 per admission	\$500 per Admission	\$700 per Admission	\$700 per Admission
Tier 3	\$750 per admission	\$1,500 per admission	Not applicable	Not applicable	No tiering	\$1,500 per Admission	No tiering	No tiering
Outpatient Surgery (copay and deductible apply)								
Tier 1	\$150 per occurrence	\$250 per Occurrence	\$150 per occurrence	\$250 per occurrence	\$150 per occurrence	\$250 per occurrence	\$150 per occurrence	\$250 per Occurrence
Tier 2	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering
Tier 3	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering	No tiering
Pharmacy – Retail (deductible does NOT apply)								
Tier 1	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10
Tier 2	\$25	\$30	\$25	\$30	\$25	\$30	\$25	\$30
Tier 3	\$50	\$65	\$50	\$65	\$50	\$65	\$50	\$65
Pharmacy – Mail Order (deductible does NOT apply)								
Tier 1	\$20	\$25	\$20	\$25	\$20	\$25	\$20	\$25
Tier 2	\$50	\$75	\$50	\$75	\$50	\$75	\$50	\$75
Tier 3	\$110	\$165	\$110	\$165	\$110	\$165	\$110	\$165
In-Network Out-of-Pocket Maximum								
Overall	\$5,000/ \$10,000*	\$5,000/\$10,000**	\$5,000/\$10,000*	\$5,000/ \$10,000**	\$5,000/\$10,000*	\$5,000/ \$10,000**	\$5,000/ \$10,000*	\$5,000/ \$10,000**

*Out-of-pocket maximum applies to medical and mental health/substance abuse costs, but does not apply to prescription drug costs in FY15.

** All medical, prescription drug, and mental health copays and deductibles apply to the out-of-pocket maximum in FY16.

Working Magic for Paraprofessionals

Para/Sub Field Rep excited for AFT MA-BTU event April 11

By Josefina Lascano

Paraprofessionals and substitutes face many obstacles during their working day, and on many occasions they need others to represent them when they are faced with an incident report. Every year, paraprofessionals face the uncertainty of losing their jobs due to budget cuts, classes being eliminated, or schools closing. My job is to go to the Boston schools and be there to support them. Not all cases are similar. Some are solved immediately, while others need to go to the next step. No matter what, I am there to be sure contractual procedures are followed.

It seems that it was just yesterday that I ran for the Paraprofessional /

Substitute Teacher Field Representative position. Since then, I have been very busy supporting paras and substitutes to the best of my ability. Meeting so many of the paraprofessionals and substitutes and listening to numerous personal stories and just watching the kind of work that they do, I couldn't be more proud of every single one of them, and to be their Field Representative.

For the past months, I have been

working, together with the Paraprofessional Council, on our 29th annual AFT-MA-BTU Statewide Paraprofessional Conference, which will be held on April 11, 2015 at the Boston Teachers Union Hall. Our guest speaker will be Interim Superintendent John McDonough.

The focus this year is to offer paras information that they can use in their daily work. The theme for this year is: "Paras are Informed and Essential." The three topics that we will be covering are: Trauma, Inclusion



PARA PLANNER
Josefina Lascano

and Autism. Among the presenters who are scheduled to participate are Stephanie Fitzpatrick, an occupational therapist at the Jackson Mann School; Colleen Labbee and Anita Sintes, who teach at Lee Academy Pilot School and the Hernandez School, respectively; and Seph Bartholomew, who works in special education and related services. There will also be a delicious luncheon and a magic show by James "Jim" Munsley, a teacher at O'Bryant High School.

These workshops will be very informative to our paras, and the information they garner will be usable in their classrooms. The topics were chosen by past participants who completed a survey after last year's conference.

I cannot wait to welcome my friends and colleagues once again from districts across Massachusetts. I hope to see you there! ■

	Unicare State Indemnity Basic		Unicare State Indemnity Plan Plus		Unicare Community Choice	
Deductible	Current	July 1, 2015	Current	July 1, 2015	Current	July 1, 2015
Individual/Family	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900	\$250/\$750	\$300/\$900
Specialist Office Visit (deductible does NOT apply)						
Tier 1	\$25 per visit	\$30 per visit	\$25 per visit	\$30 per visit	\$25 per visit	\$30 per visit
Tier 2	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit	\$35 per visit	\$60 per visit
Tier 3	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit	\$45 per visit	\$90 per visit
Inpatient Hospital Care (copay and deductible apply)						
Tier 1	\$110 per occurrence	\$275 per admission	\$250 per admission	\$275 per Admission	\$250 per admission (CC hospital) \$750 per admission (non-CC hospital)	\$275 per admission (CC hospital) \$750 per admission (non-CC hospital)
Tier 2	No tiering	No tiering	\$500 per admission	\$500 per Admission		\$750 per admission (non-CC hospital)
Tier 3	No tiering	No tiering	\$750 per admission	\$1,500 per Admission		
Outpatient Surgical Care (copay and deductible apply)						
Tier 1	\$110 per occurrence	\$250 per occurrence	\$110 per occurrence	\$110 per occurrence	CC: \$110 per occurrence	CC: \$110 per occurrence
Tier 2	No tiering	No tiering	\$110 per occurrence	\$110 per occurrence		
Tier 3	No tiering	No tiering	\$250 per occurrence	\$250 per occurrence	Non-CC: \$250 per admission, 20% coins.	Non-CC: \$250 per admission, 20% coins.
Pharmacy – Retail (deductible does NOT apply)						
Tier 1	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10
Tier 2	\$25	\$30	\$25	\$30	\$25	\$30
Tier 3	\$50	\$65	\$50	\$65	\$50	\$65
Pharmacy – Mail Order (deductible does NOT apply)						
Tier 1	\$20	\$25	\$20	\$25	\$20	\$25
Tier 2	\$50	\$75	\$50	\$75	\$50	\$75
Tier 3	\$110	\$165	\$110	\$165	\$110	\$165
Outpatient Mental Health/Substance Abuse (deductible does NOT apply)						
	\$20 per visit	\$20 per visit	\$20 per visit	\$20 per visit	\$20 per visit	\$20 per visit
Preventive Services						
	100% Covered	100% Covered	100% Covered	100% Covered	100% Covered	100% Covered
In-Network Out-of-Pocket Maximum						
Medical + Behavioral Health	\$5,000/\$10,000*	\$4,000	\$5,000/\$10,000*	\$4,000	\$5,000/\$10,000*	\$4,000
Prescription Drug	n/a	\$1,500	n/a	\$1,500	n/a	\$1,500
Overall	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Other Benefit Changes for FY16 for Active, Non-Medicare Plans:

- Annual Deductibles will move from a Calendar Year to Fiscal Year cycle effective July 1, 2016 Medicare Plans
- All Medicare plans to adopt the same Prescription Drug Copayment Structure as Active/Non-Medicare Plans: Retail \$10/\$30/\$65 depending on Tier ; Mail-Order \$25/\$75/\$165 depending on Tier
- Unicare Indemnity OME Prescription Drug Benefits change to a Medicare Part-D Employer-Group-Waiver- Plan effective January 1, 2016

This Summary is based on information available as of February 25, 2015. GIC Subscribers should closely review open-enrollment materials and GIC communications for further details. For more information, it is recommended that subscribers visit the GIC's website: Mass.Gov/GIC.

Standing Up

Continued from page 1

explained that she had entered public education because she was “committed to social justice and to public schools as the place where we grow democracy.” Observing how the first step in many political careers is school committee, Madeloni suggested that public schools are integral to democracy and that, by taking resources and students from them, charter schools undermine public support.

“Wrong,” replied Andrews, maintaining that the number of ELL students in charter schools is “growing.” Admitting that charter schools “can do more,” Andrews also maintained that his charter school colleagues are “not looking for a fight” and went so far as to suggest that this is the “difference” between charter and public school representatives.

“We are looking to serve children,” he said, “particularly black and Latino students.”

After suggesting that the achievement gap in public schools is three times as large as that in charter schools, Andrews suggested that we, “be collaborative,” positing that, “Dr. King would not want this division.”

Claiming to be “in favor of unions,” Andrews posited, “they got it wrong from the beginning,” and suggested that, “you should have united with us.”

In an effort to bridge the gap pre-

sented by Andrews, Robinson maintained that both teachers unions and charter schools are “here to stay,” as are civil rights, and that the two types of schools “provide alternative methods” to achieve this goal.

“For me, civil rights and teachers unions go hand in hand,” Robinson said, noting that AFT was the first to desegregate and that both AFT and NEA “made sure that civil rights were on the forefront.”

Robinson went on to suggest, however, that charter schools “also come out of the Civil Rights Movement,” and so questioned how and why the two “sides” have so much animosity between them.

In discussing the charter school cap (which has been a hot topic of late), Gosnell reminded the audience that AFT MA was “one of leaders against expanding the cap.” He then discussed how many of the charter schools in urban areas take resources from the public schools that need them most and that “regular public schools overwhelmingly educate the majority of students in those areas,” despite the fact that they are quickly losing resources and stand to lose more if the cap is lifted.

“Without commenting negatively on charter schools,” Gosnell said, “there is no question that they educate a very small number of students yet have an impact on all students.”

Gosnell then returned to the larger

issue of poverty, suggesting that, “If we want quality education, we must provide quality support.”

Andrews then took this idea and turned it, suggesting that, if the legislature lifts the cap, support will come in the form of choice.

“The Legislature came up with a formula of reimbursement,” he observed. “What the Legislature has failed to do is to pay according to that agreement.”

“I am troubled about how much we are having a conversation about the cap,” Madeloni admitted, returning to the larger issues of poverty and opportunity. “If we are here to talk about civil rights, why aren’t we talking about economic injustice and racism?”

After Robinson noted that charters were “created with union support” (and in fact championed by former AFT President Albert Shanker), Arsenault asked the panel if they thought that teachers unions are “a barrier to reform.”

In his response, Gosnell observed that many reforms (such as class size and student services) are championed by parents and that many unions (not just teachers’ unions) want reform outside the classroom as well.

“Unions in general...strongly support structural changes to reduce poverty,” he said.

“We should be taking about finding the haves and have-nots,” Andrews agreed, “but if we are spewing venom

that is so negative, all we are doing is helping by those who wants us to fight one another and cause more division.”

Emphasizing her view that, “without unions we don’t have democracy,” Madeloni suggested that even Dr. King understood that “unions provide workplace democracy” and so cannot be “set up” as part of the problem.

“Students learning conditions are teachers working conditions,” she observed. “If we want teachers to do their best, they need protections.”

As they do not have the support of unions, many charter school teachers end up leaving only a few years after entering their respective schools.

“That kind of unstable environment cannot be good for our children,” Madeloni suggested.

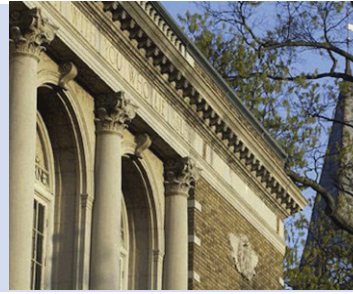
Recalling a meeting with an NEA leader who had marched with Dr. King, Robinson recalled that he was “against charters because he thought they would lead to segregation and reverse all the good work Dr. King had done.” And while he claimed that we no longer have segregation “in the same way,” Robinson openly admitted that “we have it.”

During a question and answer session, the issue was raised as to whether this dialogue would change if charters had union teachers. Noting that AFT MA does, in fact, represent a charter school, Gosnell concluded that, “The issues we have identified still remain.” ■



On Campus

Susan Krumholz, President
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



Advocating for Adjuncts

In recent decades, adjunct faculty have played an increasing role in higher education. Some “full-time” adjuncts have a larger teaching load than tenure track faculty, even though they get paid less; the argument being that they are not required to perform research and publish.

Though they are generally reasonably well paid, benefited, and respected by colleagues, the problem for many adjuncts is that the heavier teaching load and reduced research time make a transition to tenure-track positions difficult. The problem for tenured faculty is that the increased reliance on adjuncts marks a move away from the time-honored tradition of tenure that protects academic freedom. Not having access to tenure also makes full-time adjuncts vulnerable to administrative whim or political trending in rehiring.

Life for “part-time” adjuncts is much more difficult. They are paid poorly, often needing to teach multiple classes on multiple campuses each semester in order to survive. Many part-time faculty are not in unions and get no benefits. We at UMass Dartmouth were able to secure

benefits for our adjuncts after a long period of activism on the part of contingent faculty and the support of the union at the negotiating table. Even so, their benefits are meager and often in jeopardy. To qualify, they must first teach a specified number of credits over four years. They must then continue to teach a specified number of credits each year to receive continuing benefits. The formula is not always easy to compute, leaving some who believed they would be receiving benefits without them.

During the fall of 2014, UMass Dartmouth’s adjuncts made the news when four of them who were under contract to the university for the 2014-2015 school year, filed grievances against the UMass Dartmouth English Department over their spring semester teaching assignments. According to the Agreement between the University and the Faculty Federation, adjunct teaching assignments are made according to seniority. In this instance, the English Department tried to redefine seniority and reduced or eliminated the teaching responsibilities for these four part-time faculty.

Newspaper coverage of this event

made the disconcerting inference that adjunct negatively impact the academic quality of the University. Long-term adjuncts are expert in their teaching fields and well versed in the needs and expectations of both the curricula they teach and the students they serve. The fact that their duties are restricted to teaching benefits the student cohort, since their sole focus is teaching. The argument that adjunct faculty reduce the quality of education is unproven. As a union, we submit that the adjunct cohort – because they are highly student-centered and often teaching small classes – positively impacts retention at UMass Dartmouth. We are doing the adjuncts a true disservice, particularly after their years of dedicated service to the students of UMass Dartmouth, when we allow the University to frame them as responsible for lowering academic quality. This is simply not the case. The proof is in the fact that adjuncts will still be a component of the teaching force at UMD. Wouldn’t it be ironic for the university to claim them as less effective as teachers, yet continue to hire them?

Contingent faculty are organizing nationwide. Service Employees International Union has led the fight; they have won elections to unionize on more than twenty-five campuses.

Contingent faculty are fighting for a minimum wage, for benefits, and for longer contract terms. These are all important assurances, but they are only the beginning. As we at UMass Dartmouth have seen, part time contingent faculty are particularly vulnerable to even the smallest swings in enrollment, are easy to blame for problems of the larger institution, and see their benefits - including health care - fluctuate semester to semester. One point of light is a move presently under development in Massachusetts to allow contingent faculty to gain benefits by combining the courses they teach at different state institutions. In these days of mandatory health insurance this is a necessary first step to improved working conditions. An online movement of adjunct faculty is developing as well. Naming themselves National Adjunct Walkout Day, they called a walkout on February 25th, and faculty around the country walked.

Adjunct faculty work hard and play an important role in the education of our students and the continuing success of our institutions. We, the faculty unions and all union members, need to support their efforts to organize. ■

Aiming for PAR

New evaluation system helps schools and teachers

As high-stakes testing becomes a more popular means of assessment among many school administrators, evaluations and reviews become more high-stakes as well. The stress related to being observed and critiqued by supervisors and administrators can be so overwhelming that it prevents teachers from doing their best. As a result, one bad day can lead to many more as the pressure to improve grows even when it may not be appropriate.

Fortunately, there is a new model that is emerging in which colleagues are able to support each other while administering effective and accurate evaluations.

In 1981, the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program was devised in Toledo, OH, as a means of decreasing the pressure and increasing the authenticity of teacher evaluation. While the idea is not new, it has recently begun to catch on in more areas as an alternative to what is often seen as a punitive and unfair evaluation system. Having been implemented in such districts as Rochester, NY, St. Paul, MN, and Montgomery County, MD, it has also been championed by our colleagues in Boston.

“It has been something we have been discussing in Boston for 10 or 12 years,” explains BTU’s Director of Professional Learning Paul Tritter, thanking former Toledo Federation of Teachers President Dal Lawrence for devising the program and demonstrating its value and colleague Erik Berg for leading the negotiation effort that brought PAR to Boston. “Finally, we were able to find a good partner in the district and make it a reality.”

In addition to offering peer support, PAR also includes a mentor-

ing component that helps teachers succeed. For the consulting teachers, it also offers opportunities for professional advancement. In the process, PAR also strengthens the relationship between the participating district and the union.

“I heard about the PAR program from our BTU weekly bulletin,” explains Lee Franty, a former math coach and mentor who now serves as a chairperson representing the BTU. “I decided to apply to the PAR panel because I wanted to be involved in a collaborative effort between the school department and the BTU with supporting teachers in improving their practice.”

The main difference between the traditional administrative reviews system and PAR is that, in the newer system, teachers are evaluated by experienced colleagues (called “Consulting Teachers”) who are given permanent leave status in order to allow them to visit classrooms on a regular basis in order to gauge performance, track improvement and offer support. As the teachers who are being evaluated have more consistent support from a trusted colleague, they are often able to more effectively deal with issues that may have led to an administrative rating of “needs improvement” or “unsatisfactory.”

“It gets rid of the ‘us’ versus ‘them’

mentality around evaluations and feedback,” Franty suggests.

“I like that his new program... focused on the work of teachers and built on a belief that our teachers, just like our students, are able to improve if given the right kinds of supports..,” says Mark Lonegran, a 14-year math teacher who now serves as one of PAR’s consulting teachers.

When asked why it took so long to bring this proven program to Boston, Tritter said that, despite the fact that PAR frees them up to focus on other matters, many principals were reticent to change.

“Historically, principals are the most opposed to it,” he observes, noting how many local principals have also been “skeptical.”

Over time, however, people came to see that PAR is, as Tritter puts it, “fair” and that it “accurately reflects the abilities of the teachers in the program and gives people support that principals often don’t have time to give.”

As such, Tritter explains, “it became an easier sell to the membership who are now experiencing this evaluation system that seems so unfair oftentimes.”

“Both the teacher-members and the principal-members engage in honest and heartfelt dialogue about teaching practice and the needs of struggling teachers,” Berg observes.

As it is still untested in Boston, the PAR program is currently in pilot status that is not yet district-wide. Interested teachers can apply at tinyurl.com/boston-par-intake.

Currently, the Boston-based PAR has the ability to serve 24 teachers and is looking for two Consulting Teachers to participate, each of whom will work with up to 12 teachers to identify areas

of improvement, develop performance goals, and collect evidence in order to support and monitor progress. At the end of the evaluation cycle, the Consulting Teachers will offer recommendations for final ratings.

As for which teachers can be supported through PAR, they must be third-year provisional teachers who received an overall rating of “needs improvement” at the end of their second year or permanent teachers who have received an overall rating of “needs improvement” or “unsatisfactory” and have been placed on a Directed Growth or Improvement Plan of at least 6 months.

“You can apply at any time as long as you have at least six months on your plan,” explains Tritter.

While PAR is new in MA, evidence from other districts has shown that the program has many benefits for teachers, administrators, and students. PAR reduces teacher turnover and also reduces costs and litigation involved when dismissal is recommended. As the teachers are working with peers, administrators (who are relegated to the role of secondary evaluator) are also liberated to focus on other matters. Districts that have adopted PAR have also observed improved instruction, increased teacher leadership, and improved labor-management relations.

Though the introductory phase will be kept small, Tritter assures that the goal is to expand PAR after it is assured that the program is achieving its goals.

“We’re starting small,” Lonegran admits, “but hopefully creating a sustainable system that can help improve the quality of teaching across the city.”

“We want to make sure that we get the pilot right,” Tritter explains, “which means an evaluation process that is fair, transparent, and humane.” ■



Retiree Corner

Marie Ardito, Co-founder
Massachusetts Retirees United
www.retireesunited.org



SENIOR SEMINARS

How to Protect Your Nest Egg
Saturday April 18, 2015
Saturday June 27, 2015
314 Main Street, Unit 105, Wilmington

This free seminar by Elder Law Attorney Mary Howie deals with wills, trusts(irrevocable and revocable), gifting, probate, joint tenancy, direct transfers upon death, and much more.

Preparing for Retirement
Thursday, March 26, 3:30-5:30
Methuen Education Association
184 Pleasant Valley Street, Methuen

Wednesday, April 1, 5:30-7:30
Relief's Inn (formerly Knights of Columbus)
One Market Street, Lawrence

Monday April 13, 3-5
Lynn Teacher's Union Hall
679 Western Avenue, Lynn

Tuesday, May 5, 2:30-4:30
Blackstone Valley Regional Voc-Tech -
Teacher's Café Annex
65 Pleasant Street, Upton

Wednesday April 29, 2:45-4:45
Chelsea High School, Room B3205
299 Everett Avenue, Chelsea
(Chelsea teachers/support staff only)

Marie Ardito's presentation is directed to people retiring in the next 10 years from public sector jobs. It provides an understanding of the retirement system and options, as well as a legal checklist, tips for protecting assets, advice about understanding Medicare, and much more.

To register for any seminar, email contact@retireesunited.org or call 781-365-0205. Please give the name of the seminar, your name, phone number and the number attending.

“Join or Die”

Benjamin Franklin had it right when he developed the cartoon of the snake cut into eight pieces and labeled it join or die. The only way the colonies could survive was to be united and the same is true today for those of us fighting injustices. Unfortunately, at present we have members of our government committed to divide and conquer.

The most recent example of this is the issue that we have been working on for years, the complete repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset. A House Version of this bill has already been filed H.R.973 and has 73 members of Congress already signed on. In the previous session, the number that signed on was 129, so we are well ahead of the numbers to date.

The Repeal Bill was first filed in July 2001. Many of us worked to get this complete repeal filed instead of the band-aid approach for some, which addressed only a small group and was based on a means test. Then I told Congressman Barney Frank at a hearing at Faneuil Hall that such legislation would be obsolete before it even got passed, as those eligible by the means test would have died off.

Recently, I heard of a bill filed by Congressman Kevin Brady of Texas, which only addresses the WEP section of the penalties for those who will be sixty-two as of 2016. The WEP will not be completely repealed, only adjusted. There will be some adjustment to the penalty for those who reached age 62 in the 90's to the present and

have borne the brunt of the penalties, but it will be minimal. I'm sorry, but this does not cut the mustard with me. I am tired of members of the legislature, be they at the state or federal level, be they Democrat, Republican or Independent who know how to change laws so it will benefit their retirements while leaving behind those on smaller incomes and who have suffered the penalties for a good number of years. This is true of the WEP/GPO legislation, the Veterans' Bill and the Option B / Option C Survivor Benefit that MRU is addressing at the state level.

We, and all in the public sector in some fourteen other states, as well as federal employees had no say about contributing to Social Security; we were never given the option. And more importantly, we never will be given it, as it is too costly. Right now the employee contributes 6.2% of gross compensation up to \$117,000 and the employer matches it. Who will be the employer doing the matching, the state or the local community? Can you imagine what this would do to budgets? It will never happen and we are paying for it by being under penalty.

As the Social Security Fairness Organization of which MRU is affiliated stated, "Laws prevented you from earning Social Security benefits while you were working as a public servant, and when you retired, other laws prevented you from collecting the benefits you had paid for in other work or had earned as a dependent, this is SO wrong."

Some of you reading this article

will shrug your shoulders and say it will never happen. If we don't continue our work on this it never will happen. Others may think that the above comments are just what we can expect from government today. Today we have not held politicians accountable enough. We do not make them understand they work for us, our vote is not for sale, and if they want our vote they must earn it by representing our needs and issues. We need to let them know their boilerplate responses for dismissing our requests are not acceptable. It used to be that five phone calls on any issue sent up a red flag that the issue was important. Today they ignore the red flag; no number seems to get some of them moving.

You and only you can decide if you are going to sit on the sidelines or join in the fight. Too many feel comfortable with their head in the sand. Go to www.retireesunited.org and on our front page you will see the link that will connect you to the tally of all those who have signed on to co-sponsor the bill. Work on your Member of Congress and email friends, relatives and former colleagues in other states to ask them to join in the effort. You will also see on that tally sheet when the Senate version is filed. We have to be united so we do not lose the fight to correct these injustices. ■

Policy Perspective: Madison Park

By Cory O'Hayer

Massachusetts' three largest cities - Worcester, Springfield and Boston - all strive to provide a first-class education to a diverse student population. All three districts also provide multiple opportunities for students to excel in the classroom, through traditional academics or through a comprehensive vocational and technical education.

Boston's Madison Park Technical Vocational High School has unfortunately faced a challenging school year, as a series of administrative missteps and misguided policy changes have led to incidences such as September's scheduling fiasco and subsequent student walkout. No district's vocational schools run without quandary, and policymakers have begun to look toward Springfield and Worcester's vocational schools which, in recent years, have been heralded as having successfully turned into models of career and technical education.

Worcester Technical High School and Springfield's Putnam Technical Academy both lacked proper investment and attention a decade ago. Worcester invested \$90 million into rebuilding their high school, and Springfield invested \$114 million. Their new facilities housed vocations as diverse as sheet metal and robotics in Springfield, to culinary arts and veterinary science in Worcester. Worces-

ter saw its four year graduation rate rise to 98%, and a majority of students now pursue postsecondary education.

It should be noted, however, that these schools no longer educated the same student body. Rather than serve as catch-all high schools for the district, Springfield and Worcester implemented an application process in which prospective students would have to specifically apply to enroll. Additionally, while the schools maintained more traditional vocational programs, they also incorporated programs that placed a heavier emphasis on college readiness and partnered with local universities to facilitate the college transition process. While Springfield and Worcester's schools still aimed on providing an education focused on student experience and technical knowhow, the schools had transitioned into more academically centered high schools, that would also maintain a postsecondary education career track.

President Barack Obama spoke at Worcester Technical High School's graduation in 2014, after he pledged \$100 million in grants for career readiness education. This pledge came in light of a growing American skills-gap, and the concern that jobs requiring highly-skilled workers will go unfilled in an increasingly complex economy. The goal now is to change our prior system of career education

for a more highly educated workforce, using vocational schools as a medium. Students who may have previously enrolled in vocational schools may find that they no longer meet the criteria to do so, and will have to return to the more stringent academic environment from which they came.

Vocational technical high schools are a key institution in major public school districts, and an important alternative for those seeking a hands-on education. In its effort to provide a free and equal education to all students, Boston must find a way to bolster strong vocational programs and support students as they prepare for their future careers. A vocational education must be comprehensive not only in incorporating academics into a career and technical curriculum, but also in incorporating both traditional and nontraditional learners into its academic environment. ■

Cory O'Hayer has a Master's degree in urban education policy from Brown University and works in the Boston Public Schools.

Check it out!



www.aftma.org



SERVING UP SUCCESS
Trumpet player Patrick Hughes, a senior in the Culinary Arts program at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School was awarded the Judges' Choice Award for best performance at the Berklee High School Jazz Festival.

Legislator Profile: Pat Jehlen

A note from our President:

Senator Jehlen worked strenuously to retain the cap on charter schools in the last session of the legislature. AFT MA appreciates everything she did to insure that the cap was retained.

While many of our legislators stand with our members on nearly every issue (for which we are grateful!), some have a connection to and an understanding of the world of education that surpass even the most devoted representative. Pat Jehlen is one such person. Having served on the Senate since 2005, Jehlen is currently vice-chair of the Education Committee. Yet even this does not speak fully to her dedication to teachers and to education.

The fact is that, long before she was a legislator, Jehlen was a teacher, and therefore knows full well what her colleagues go through every day and how hard they work to serve their students and communities. She also served on the Somerville School Committee and was a division chair of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC).

When asked about her own education, Jehlen recalls the names of the many teachers who helped her on her path to academic and professional fulfillment. The first name she mentions is of her high school history teacher, Mr. MacDonald.

"In high school, my schedule didn't permit me to take AP History," Jehlen explains, "but Mr. MacDonald let me take it as an independent study."

While this first connection between teacher and student was profound and meaningful, it also bore fruit for Jehlen later in life in more ways than one, for not only did it lead her to her career as a high school history teacher, it also gave her a job.

"[When] he went on to teach at the Harvard Ed School," Jehlen continues, "[Mr. MacDonald] hired me as a research assistant."

An even earlier connection was that between Jehlen and her fourth grade teacher Miss Cunniff.

"When we were learning about the explorers looking for routes to Asia," she recalls, "we made applesauce and then added many different spices so we'd know what the explorers hoped to bring back from India."

Jehlen also notes that Miss Cunniff also sparked in her an interest in ornithology by having her students keep track of the various birds they saw in their neighborhoods. She still can recite poems Miss Cunniff had the

class learn.

"It was a memorable year," Jehlen says, "but I doubt if any of that would have made it onto a standardized test."

For Jehlen, it was such creative opportunities that went a bit off the track that made her academic career so rich and it was the people who created them who continue to make her life rich as well.

"These personal relationships were so important," she says, noting that there were "many more teachers I could mention who influenced me in a positive way."

One negative that Jehlen suggests in her own education and one that she continues to see in schools today is a lack of civics-related learning.

"I don't think I got a good civic education," she says, "or any encouragement in school to be involved in politics." In fact, she says, had it not been for her family and friends, she may have taken a completely different path altogether. Fortunately, she was exposed to local politics and to such life-changing opportunities as working with migrant farm workers in VISTA.

"That helped motivate me to work for economic justice," she suggests.

Sadly, Jehlen observes, many of today's students do not get such opportunities and so do not seem to be appropriately aware of the systems that govern and so shape their lives.

"I think young people are not as engaged in political action as they should be," she says. "Most students now miss out on civic education."

Perhaps this is another reason (in addition to the inspiration of teachers like Mr. MacDonald and Miss Cunniff) that Jehlen first taught history before moving into the legislature as a means of shaping it.

"When I was teaching history, I tried to show that history is happening right now," she recalls, "and that we can participate. I asked students to volunteer...so they could see beyond books and newspapers and imagine that they could make a difference."

What Jehlen suggests makes matters worse for many of today's students (and teachers) is that they are often not given a chance to make a difference because all the difference-

making comes from above.

"The main problem I see today is top down control," she says, citing the attempt to "judge and punish students, teachers, schools, and districts based on very limited measures."

Jehlen takes hope, however, in the fact that some creative teachers are still insisting on doing things their own way.

"When our oldest granddaughter was in fourth grade," she recalls, "the teachers were asked to make data walls showing individual students' performance on MAPS tests. Instead, her teacher asked students to write about what they had learned that year. Some students wrote about how they could now write longer stories, or use bigger words. One student said he'd learned not to bother other kids. Those were real achievements that they were proud of [and] that are making a difference in their lives."

Such independent goal-setting encourages students and teachers to engage more fully and results in a deeper level of learning and understanding and more successful application in the real world.

"Setting their own goals helped them prepare to be more independent learners," Jehlen suggests.

That is why, as a member of the Education Committee, Jehlen is firmly in support of ways

in which schools and teachers can help support the entire student, not just those elements that show up on standardized tests.

"I want teachers to be able to pay attention to kids' social skills and creativity instead of just analyzing which kinds of questions they need to answer," Jehlen maintains.

She also suggests that the standardization of education hurts students in more ways than one.

"Judging people and schools by scores that are so closely correlated with social class does even more damage than narrowing the curriculum," she observes, noting that, when students underperform on standardized tests, many parents see it as a sign of a failing school and so withdraw their children from it, thereby making the pool of remaining students even less diverse and strong.

"They think the school is bad," Jehlen observes, "and those who

can seek to leave for charters, more affluent districts, private schools, or homeschooling...depriving the school of support and leadership."

Instead of relying on filling in bubbles, Jehlen proposes that we come up with a better means of assessment.

"We need to develop new ways to demonstrate whether schools are delivering for children on the things parents and communities value," she says, suggesting such aspects as creativity, engagement, collaboration, character, and joy, as well as academic achievement in more areas. In addition to citing such states as California and New York, and her own home district of Somerville, that are "developing new systems of accountability that respond to these values," Jehlen also points out that, "other countries we say we want to emulate use more human-scale, less bureaucratic measures."

Speaking of the human scale of education, Jehlen brings the issue back once again to the teachers, many of whom seem to be misunderstood and mistreated.

"Educators today are believed to be so smart and skillful, they could conquer all of our deep social problems if they wanted to," she says. "At the same time, they're treated as if they were so dumb and incompetent that people outside the profession have to tell them exactly what to do every minute. This schizophrenic philosophy has caused great harm to children, especially to those who are not yet fluent in English or come from low-income families. They are the ones whose school life is turned into narrow test prep and whose schools are in danger of closing because they don't match a bureaucrat's mirage."

Though her view may appear dim, there is a growing ray of light.

"We are at a turning point," she says. "More and more people realize that this approach isn't working. There is a national revolt against high-stakes testing."

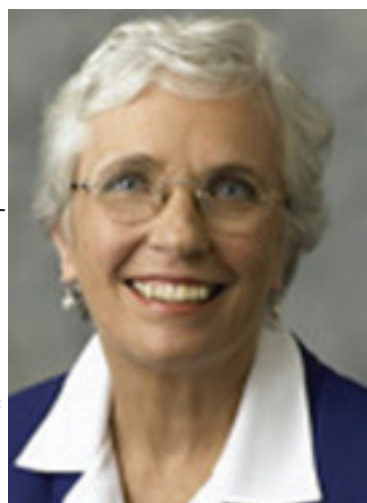
Having been launched by education research, Jehlen says that this revolt is being joined by more and more teachers, parents, and other stake-holders.

"Some states and cities are working on new approaches to hold schools and teachers accountable for the things communities actually value," she suggests, citing such local elements as the Less Testing, More Learning movement (supported by Citizen for Public Schools) that is "working to start rolling back the consequences" of testing.

"I encourage more AFT members to get involved," Jehlen says. ■

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To learn more about AFT + benefits, including the 15% wireless discount, or to apply for the rebates, visit AFT.org/Benefits. ■



FROM ONE TO ANOTHER
Senator Pat Jehlen

Benefit Bulletin: Making the Call

In this series, we hope to inform our members about the many benefits of belonging to and participating in AFT. Should you have any questions or comments, send them to advocate@aftma.net.

Now is a great time to get savings, service and solidarity with the only national unionized wireless service. Take advantage of limited-time rebates from AT&T totaling \$250 for AFT + Credit Card holders.

The cardholder rebate covers the costs of your qualifying smartphone upgrade and one month of the qualifying data plan services up to \$100. If you switch from a non-union wireless provider like Sprint or T-Mobile, you can receive an additional \$150 rebate. In addition, all AFT members can save 15% on select AT&T wireless plans.

A member who taught first graders for 30 years as an AFT member,

needed a new smartphone. "My old phone was nine years old," she says. "I couldn't even text on it!"

When she went online to pay her Union Plus credit card bill, she saw an offer for a \$100 rebate on a new AT&T smartphone, "I didn't really believe it," she says. Now she is calling, texting, and even taking pictures all the time.

"I just took pictures at my granddaughter's school show," she smiles.

The AFT + AT&T discount features savings, service and solidarity. As a union member, you'll save 15% off the regular monthly rate on select wireless cell phone plans. You will also get great service from AT&T's union workers and great performance from the nation's fastest network. In the process, you will also be supporting 40,000 union workers at AT&T Mobility who are members of the Communications Workers of America (CWA).

The AFT + Credit Card program is

for union members and their families and offers a competitive interest rate, U.S.-based customer service, and unique hardship benefits for eligible cardholders.

The AFT + Mortgage program, with financing provided by Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, is packed with unique benefits tailored to meet the needs of active or retired union members, as well as their parents and children. Union members who are

